Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Work Session

Minutes

22 East Broad Street
Newnan, GA 30263
www.coweta.ga.us

Shannon Zerangue
Fran Collins
770.254.2601

April 14, 2026 **9:00 AM** **Commission Chambers**
37 Perry Street
Newnan, GA 30263

Coweta County Board of Commissioners

Roll Call/Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Bill McKenzie	District 2 - Chairman	Present
Alphonso Smith	District 5 - Vice Chairman	Present
Jeff Fisher	District 1	Present
Bob Blackburn	District 3	Present
John Reidelbach	District 4	Present
Michael Fouts	County Administrator	Present
Kelly Mickle	Assistant County Administrator	Present
Sandy Wisenbaker	Assistant County Administrator	Present
Tod Handley	Public Works Administrator	Present
Nathan Lee	County Attorney	Present
Shannon Zerangue	County Clerk	Present

The Honorable Board of Commissioners of Coweta County, Georgia conducted a Work Session on Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman McKenzie called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman McKenzie led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner Smith.

Regular Session

1. **Discussion Regarding the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**

Administrator Fouts explained that the County's fiscal year begins on October 1st and as the budget preparation process begins, staff is seeking direction from the Board regarding any potential changes, additions, etc. that the Board desires in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, including services, service delivery, or other priorities. He noted that Assistant Finance Director Amy Henson has already contacted department leaders and elected officials and asked that they submit their FY 2027 budget requests, including operations, personnel, and capital by Monday, April 27, 2026.

Mr. Fouts also explained that District Attorney Herb Cranford and Solicitor General Amy Godfrey were present to address the Board regarding their budget requests. Superior Court Public Defender Rick Samper was unable to attend today's Work Session. He added that because the fiscal year for these offices begins on July 1st under the State's system, they generally present their needs ahead of the County's budget timeline.

Regarding the FY 2027 budget, Mr. Fouts noted that today's Work Session is focused on hearing from the Board and sharing a few initial considerations. The next step will involve the budget team meeting individually with department leaders and elected officials to review their requests. This process will culminate in June-July with two (2) Work Sessions with the Board, where staff will present a draft budget and the millage rates. In July and August, the required Public Hearings will be conducted, followed by the Board's adoption of the proposed final budget and millage rates.

Mr. Fouts explained that there are several factors that drive the County's budget, with personnel and benefits being the most significant. From an operational standpoint, year-over-year changes tend to be minimal. Increases are typically limited to areas such as software maintenance contracts, which have grown substantially, fuel costs, postage, and vehicle maintenance. Overall, the primary drivers of budget growth continue to be salaries and benefits. Looking ahead to FY 2027, the issuance of bonds associated with the new Government Center and the new Animal Adoption Center will be incorporated into the upcoming budget as more details become available regarding financing those projects. Additionally, voters approved the Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) referendum last year, so staff will be working to incorporate this new one-cent sales tax as a revenue source in Fiscal Year 2027. While the General Assembly recently considered measures related to property tax relief and homestead exemptions, the final outcome was less impactful on the County's revenue projections as initially anticipated. Staff is still working through some of the implementation details, particularly regarding the timing and application of FLOST revenues, but expects more clarity from the State in the coming months. At this time, staff estimates the additional one-cent sales tax will generate approximately $25 to $26 million in revenue. Finally, for the past several years, as set out in the Employee Handbook, the County has included merit-based increases correlated to performance evaluations. With the transition to a new performance evaluation system, staff will likely ask the Board to consider a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for FY 2027 in place of merit increases during this interim period.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Administrator Fouts explained that the Employee Handbook outlines a process for merit increases based upon performance evaluations. The scale is determined by evaluation scores and corresponding percentage increases, subject to available budget funding. For the upcoming year, Administration and Community and Human Resources staff will collaborate to design a more efficient evaluation system. As part of this transition, staff will be asking the Board to consider implementing a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in place of merit increases for FY 2027.

In response to questions from Commissioner Reidelbach, Community and Human Resources Director Patricia Palmer explained that a comprehensive position classification and compensation analysis was conducted several years ago. Since then, evaluations have been performed on a department-by-department or area-by-area basis, comparing positions to those in similar governments and agencies. More recently, analyses have been completed for the Fire Department, the Correctional Institute (C.I.), and other positions. A review of the Solicitor's and District Attorney's offices has also been conducted. However, differences in the size, structure, responsibilities, and caseloads of other counties and institutions make broad comparisons challenging.

Administrator Fouts explained that DA Cranford has another meeting to attend and yielded the floor to Mr. Cranford.

District Attorney Cranford provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding his budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. During his presentation, he explained that an Assistant District Attorney (ADA) position, currently funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant program at a salary of $134,000, will lose its grant funding. He requested that the County assume funding for the position at an annual cost of $175,365.19 (including benefits). He noted that the individual currently serving in this role has demonstrated exceptional skill and productivity since being hired in May 2025. He also emphasized key operational metrics, including the volume of annual and open cases, employee turnover, the backlog of serious violent felony cases, delays affecting both victims and defendants, and the potential long-term risks to community safety. Additionally, he requested a comprehensive assessment of the pay scale for prosecutors in both the District Attorney's Office and the Solicitor's Office, stating that current compensation levels are not competitive and fall below market standards.

Administrator Fouts explained that in FY 2026, the Board approved an appropriation of $1.65 million for the District Attorney's budget, and that DA Cranford is requesting an additional $175,000, which is approximately a 10–11% increase over the prior year. He noted that the Justice Center, opened in 2006, has undergone multiple expansions and is now at capacity following the addition of judges and support staff. He emphasized that a significant capital project is on the horizon to address staffing, parking, and related needs, while resources must continue to support case prosecution. At the same time, capital demands at the Justice Center continue to grow. Additionally, he pointed out that even if savings are realized from case turnover/resolution, fixed costs associated with a bond issuance for the jail expansion project (completed in 2024) will not decrease. Staff can coordinate with Finance and the Sheriff to determine the current per diem rate to house an inmate at the jail. He added that last year it was indicated the cost was $70 per day, but with the new jail and rising operating expenses, that figure is expected to have increased.

Solicitor General Amy Godfrey explained that her office is currently understaffed, and she is requesting the addition of an Investigator and a Senior Assistant Solicitor for Fiscal Year 2027. She further explained that the Investigator would be assigned to support the third judge’s courtroom, which was added several years ago. The Senior Assistant Solicitor would manage responsibilities such as jail arraignment calendars, open records requests, record restrictions, and bond forfeitures, allowing her (Ms. Godfrey) to focus on higher-level duties. She emphasized that her office handles a significantly high volume of cases and spends a significant amount of time in court prosecuting misdemeanors, which leaves attorneys with limited time to prepare for trial. She noted that out of 250 working days in the year, only 35 days are without scheduled court proceedings. The office regularly appears in court for arraignments, jail arraignments, probation violation hearings, bench trials, motion hearings, jury trials, pretrial diversion calendars, DUI court, Veterans Treatment Court, and administrative license suspension hearings to help facilitate plea agreements in DUI cases. She also noted that when the position for a third judge was approved, it included two Assistant Solicitors, a Victim Advocate, an Investigator, and a Legal Assistant. With the exception of the Investigator, all the positions have been filled. The Investigator position is needed to properly staff the third judge's courtroom, and she is now requesting approval to fill that final role.

Ms. Godfrey fielded questions from Commissioner Reidelbach regarding the number of Assistant Solicitors in her office.

Mr. Fouts noted that from a budgetary standpoint, the Solicitor's FY 2026 was approximately $2 million, including the Victim Witness Fund. Unlike the DA's budget, the Solicitor's budget is 100% locally funded. The District Attorney's $1.65 million budget is only a portion of their funding because they also receive state funds.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that staff has not met with the Solicitor's office yet to discuss the FY 2027 budget, but Ms. Godfrey's requests will be incorporated into the FY 2027 budget presentation in July. He also explained that when the County chose to add a third State Court Judge a few years ago. Judge John Herbert Cranford and others, including the Sheriff's Office, State Court Clerk, Probation, bailiffs, and the Solicitor General, worked together to phase in staffing over a three-year period to support the addition of a third judge. The Solicitor General's Office has received all planned positions except for the Investigator, which is the final step in that staffing plan.

Returning to his presentation regarding the overall budget, Mr. Fouts explained that the County's health insurance broker, Mr. Todd Bryant from Alliant Insurance Services, was present to discuss the County's health insurance.

Mr. Fouts explained that Mr. Bryant has been the County's health insurance broker for over a decade and has worked with staff during that time on the County's health insurance plan(s). He further explained that over the years, working with Mr. Bryant and his team, along with the Board's support, several changes have been made to the County's health insurance. As a result, more than 96% of insured employees are now utilizing a high-deductible plan paired with their own health savings account (HSA). In addition, the County offers a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) option.

In addition, Mr. Fouts noted that in 2025, the County transitioned from a self-insured plan to a fully insured plan because the self-insured option was no longer financially feasible. He also explained that Ms. Mickle provided information to show how costs are increasing year-over-year per employee versus just the total overall cost. In closing, he explained that costs continue to increase year over year largely driven by health insurance inflation, which Mr. Bryant will discuss in more detail.

Mr. Bryant introduced himself to the Board and explained that he serves as the lead consultant with Alliant Insurance Services. He works with a broader team that includes a medical director, clinical staff, pharmacy experts, analytics, communications, and account management. In addition, he and his team have been working closely with County staff for many years. He further explained that their clinical team helped evaluate and launch the County's onsite employee health clinic, noting that a shortage of primary care providers in Coweta County was a key reason the clinic was established.

Mr. Bryant explained that his team works with County staff to try and find a middle ground to identify a provider that delivers the best possible services while considering the cost equation for the County. Currently, the County utilizes Cigna and that relationship has been maintained for several years. Overall, the employees and their dependents have been satisfied with Cigna. With that being said, Cigna may not be the right solution for 2027, but member satisfaction is important, and the employees appear to be generally satisfied.

Mr. Bryant stated that his team annually presents a range of potential benefit solutions. In 2025, one of these options included a pharmacy carve-out vendor offering expanded strategies such as manufacturer and patient assistance programs, as well as drug importation. He noted that other county and municipal jurisdictions are implementing a variety of similar approaches and alternatives. However, while this alternative would have provided cost savings for the County, the potential negative impacts on the employees outweighed those benefits. As a result, the decision was made to remain with Cigna for an additional year, with 2027-2028 plan years still under consideration.

Mr. Bryant further emphasized that, in addition to fully insured options such as Cigna, many solutions involve self-funded arrangements. He stressed the importance of comprehensive stop-loss coverage, noting that it is often an underappreciated component of plan design. Based on his experience, stop-loss coverage in other jurisdictions' self-funded programs may be insufficient. He explained that Alliant places approximately $1 billion in stop-loss coverage annually, which he believes is a significant advantage to clients, including the County. He emphasized the importance of working with highly reputable carriers, noting that large claims ranging from $500,000 to over $2 million are becoming more frequent. Alliant prioritizes reliability to avoid situations where claims are disputed or unpaid and works primarily with well-established, direct writers, including major carriers such as Berkshire, Tokio Marine, Symetra, and Sun Life.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach regarding pharmaceuticals obtained from Canada and Medicare restrictions, Mr. Bryant explained that a number of counties, cities, and private employers are using similar approaches to manage costs, but this does fall outside standard regulatory norms.

Assistant Administrator Mickle clarified that post-65 retirees are covered under a separate County Medicare supplemental plan and are not included in the active employee group health plan or the associated cost analysis, including pharmacy strategies such as importing drugs from Canada.

Commissioner Reidelbach questioned whether the claim amounts Mr. Bryant referenced earlier reflected billed charges or amounts actually paid.

Mr. Bryant clarified that he was referring to stop-loss claim exposure and that the figures he cited reference billed or face-value charges, not final paid amounts. He noted that actual payments are typically lower based upon contracted rates or agreed pricing. He added that under reference-based pricing, certain high-cost procedures such as cardiac events may be reduced significantly from billed amounts when paid at Medicare-based or negotiated rates. He further stated that stop-loss coverage benefits from reference-based pricing because it reduces the overall allowed claim amounts, resulting in lower claims exposure for the plan.

Commissioner Reidelbach expressed the importance of employee education from Human Resources and the County's insurance broker could help employees understand healthcare costs based upon healthcare facilities/settings.

Mr. Bryant commended the Board for supporting the onsite employee health clinic and stressed the importance of consistent use of the clinic by the employees as a means to help curb the overall costs to the County.

Administrator Fouts explained that staff is preparing for the upcoming benefit renewal process. The current 2026 employee benefit guide includes compliant and non-compliant rate tiers based upon completion of wellness requirements. The County share represents the total cost to the County, with a separate monthly cost for employees. He noted that a budget adjustment of approximately $800,000 in higher-than-expected costs was absorbed into the FY 2026 budget rather than passed through to the employees. He also noted that the County's cost-sharing structure over time has shifted versus the industry norm at roughly 80% contributed by the employer and 20% by the employee to the County now paying 95% and the employees paying 5%. Staff plans to recommend that the Board consider increasing the employee cost share and possibly introducing an additional plan option with a different plan design so the employee, should they choose to stay at the same rate, will have another option.

Commissioner Reidelbach noted that a potential change in providers would be a primary concern for employees.

Mr. Bryant explained that Cigna and Anthem are the most competitive providers locally, while other carriers, such as United and Aetna, are less viable because of higher costs and weaker networks.

Chairman McKenzie expressed his desire for the County to continue to provide high-quality benefits to the employees, and emphasized the importance of considering both the cost impact on the employees as well as on the taxpayers when staff is evaluating benefit options.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that in 2025, the total cost approximately $20 million with $15 million in medical claims and $5 million in pharmacy costs.

Mr. Bryant noted that these figures may include some administrative/overhead expenses from Cigna, and estimated that the administrative fees might have been approximately $1.5 million.

Ms. Mickle explained that in 2023 and 2024, the County paid approximately $2.9 million and $3 million, respectively, and in both of those years the County was self-insured. These figures included combined administrative costs and stop-loss premiums, with the majority attributed to stop-loss coverage.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach regarding the impact of "most favored nation" pricing on pharmacy costs, Mr. Bryant stated that he finds the concept promising, and it may help reduce costs over time, but he has not seen any significant savings. He noted that rising utilization of high-cost drugs, including treatments for rare conditions and certain metabolic or diabetic-related conditions continues to drive pharmacy costs upward.

Mr. Fouts provided an example of a potential additional HSA plan option with different deductible and out-of-pocket structures. He noted that varying plan design options are being considered to accommodate different employee needs. Staff's goal is to offer choices to employees so they can select the plan that best fits their circumstances, particularly if the employee cost-share increases.

Commissioner Reidelbach expressed concerns regarding the increase in out-of-pocket costs for employees, particularly the deductibles.

Mr. Bryant noted that approximately 10% of the County's employees do not utilize the health insurance at all. In contrast, roughly 1% of the group accounts for the majority of healthcare usage. This highlights a significant disparity in how healthcare benefits are utilized by the employees. He also noted that a small segment represents catastrophic cases reaching $100,000 or more. The remainder of the group is more evenly distributed, with approximately half being considered healthy and the other half managing chronic conditions. Although adding another HSA option would increase out-of-pocket costs by approximately 35%, it is a viable alternative for consideration. It could possibly be paired with some meaningful cost differential that would make it more appealing to employees.

Mr. Fouts highlighted the onsite clinic as a contributing factor in supporting an additional HSA plan and in influencing utilization and managing costs because the $25 per "sick" visit is considerably lower than what employees are paying at other treatment facilities now.

Community and Human Resources Director Patricia Palmer addressed Commissioner Reidelbach's earlier comment regarding employee education and ability to review and challenge billing. She explained that, with the Board's support, employees have been given increased access to education, information, and tools to help them become more effective advocates for their own healthcare decisions and expenses. That being said, not all employees may feel comfortable utilizing these resources, nor have an interest in or willingness to engage at that level, despite their availability.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Ms. Palmer explained that the County's Benefits Manager does have the knowledge and ability to assist employees with understanding medical bills; however, that is not her primary function. The County's Wellness Coordinator (registered nurse) has the necessary HIPAA clearance and is able to work more directly with employees, including accessing detailed information as appropriate, to help review specific situations, answer questions, and provide guidance regarding medical bills and records.

In response to a question from Commissioner Blackburn, Mr. Bryant explained that employees do not currently have the option to utilize alternative prescription pricing programs such as "TrumpRx". However, emerging models in the marketplace are contributing to downward pressure on pharmacy costs. As a result, traditional carriers such as Cigna are expected to adapt to these pricing trends over time.

Mr. Fouts explained that as a final item related to today's FY 2027 budget discussion is the tax digest. Early indications suggest that the tax digest is expected to remain relatively flat for the year. While some growth has occurred, it is not substantial, and no significant year-over-year change is anticipated. This will be taken into account as staff begins budget calculations, including the millage rate, and updated figures will be presented to the Board in July. He expressed his appreciation to Chief Appraiser Dean Henson and his team for compiling and analyzing the digest data.

In response to a question from Assistant County Administrator Mickle, Mr. Henson explained that, under current guidance, the inflationary growth factor associated with HB581 is approximately 2.17%, and this figure is being implemented for homestead property calculations. However, preliminary estimates indicate that the overall tax digest is expected to grow by only 2% this year.

Mr. Fouts explained that there are still several items that are pending, with additional changes contingent upon the Governor's signature on related legislation. Further details are still being reviewed and staff is waiting for final authorization and implementation guidance from the State.

In response to comments from Chairman McKenzie, Mr. Fouts noted that there remains uncertainty at the state level regarding guidance to local governments. He noted that when clear direction is not available, it becomes difficult for staff to explain any associated implications to the citizens. He emphasized that staff's efforts are ongoing to clarify the outstanding issues and provide as much information as possible as it becomes available.

2. **Discussion Regarding the Quality Development Corridor District Ordinance**

Community Development Director Ben Sewell explained that in light of recent development trends, it has come to staff's attention that the Board may wish to consider updates and housekeeping amendments to the *Quality Development Corridor District* (*QDCD*) standards. He provided a brief history regarding the development of the *QDCD,* explaining that in the early 2000s, the Board of Commissioners recognized that the rapidly growing Thomas Crossroads area was developing in a manner that was less than desirable in terms of overall design quality and site development standards for buildings being constructed. Concerns were raised that portions of the area were beginning to decline and some predicted that future investment could decline if action was not taken to improve or enhance development patterns in this area.

Mr. Sewell further explained that staff decided to request that the Board employ an overlay district on Hwy. 34 to enhance the design standards within 1,000 feet of the highway. The *QDCD* overlay would primarily prescribe enhanced building design standards and landscaping requirements without changing the underlying zoning or permitted uses. Following the initial development, the Board adopted the first *Quality Development Corridor District* along Hwy. 34 in May 2003 (see May 6, 2003 minutes) which was received favorably by the citizens. In mid 2005, the Board enacted a moratorium on all commercial development (see July 7, 2005 minutes "RM0507494") and instructed staff to begin expanding the *QDCD* to other areas of the county. In 2005, the Board adopted all the other *QDCDs* in the county (see September 15, 2005 minutes) and no new districts have been added since that time. However, the Board does often grant zoning approvals conditioned upon a site meeting the *QDCD* requirements even though the subject property may not be physically located within a *QDCD*.

Mr. Sewell continued by explaining that there is a *Quality Development Corridor District* located in each of the five (5) Commission districts and, therefore, impacts each Commissioner's district. He clarified that the *QDCD* requirements only apply to commercial and industrial uses and do not extend to residential development. He noted that, in its most basic form, the *QDCD* establishes enhanced architectural and landscaping standards. The architectural requirements specify that buildings within the corridor must be constructed using a minimum of 80% Class A materials, defined as brick, natural stone, or storefront glass system. Up to 20% of the building materials may consist of Category B materials. In addition to architectural standards, the *QDCD* also includes enhanced landscaping requirements. Specifically, it effectively doubles the required landscape bed area. The frontage landscaping requirement is increased to a 20-foot width, compared to the standard 10 feet, and perimeter landscaping is increased to up to 10 feet. In addition, the district requires larger-caliper trees, with a minimum size of 3.5 inches compared to the standard 2 inches. The standards also require landscaped treatment of the area between the development and the edge of the pavement, with the intent of creating a more finished appearance upon completion of development.

Mr. Sewell noted that existing buildings at the time that the *QDCDs* were adopted are exempt, and any additions or renovations to those buildings are not required to meet the full *QDCD* standards. This includes expansions of existing sites and properties within industrial parks that are not visible from the highway. He also noted that there are specific prohibitions in the *QDCD*, including telecommunication towers, billboards, outdoor peddling, and visible outdoor storage.

Attorney Lee and Mr. Sewell fielded a question from Commissioner Reidelbach regarding telecommunications towers and the *QDCD* restrictions.

Mr. Sewell continued his presentation by explaining that following the economic impacts of the 2008 recession, many properties were left vacant and later returned to use around 2014. In response, the Board adopted more flexible provisions to encourage reinvestment in those structures. As part of the amendment to the *QDCD* ordinance, architectural requirements for buildings being reoccupied were reduced to approximately 50% of the standard *QDCD* requirements, allowing for 40% Category A materials instead of the full 80% required (see May 18, 2010 minutes). In 2016, the Board adopted additional revisions to the *QDCD* standards. These changes included removing the requirement for decorative driveways and allowing painted brick, which was previously prohibited (see July 7, 2016 minutes). He also noted that the Board has granted a number of variances over the years related to *QDCD* standards, and staff has administrative authority to approve limited deviations, including reducing required building material percentages by up to 15% along with certain other minor adjustments to the standards. While this allows some flexibility without Board interaction, it does not allow staff to add new building materials. He noted that variance requests are most commonly related to outdoor screening requirements and incorporation of building materials that are not included on the list of approved materials under *QDCD* standards.

Mr. Sewell explained that staff recognizes that building design and development trends evolve over time and agree that updates to the *QDCD* standards should be considered. Staff has reviewed pending variance cases and has identified the following potential updates to the ordinance:

- Allowing architectural metal panels [aluminum composite materials (ACM)] as a category A building material
- Allowing synthetic stone as a Category A building material
- Allowing thin brick as a Category B building material

In addition, Mr. Sewell explained that staff would also ask that the Board consider authorizing staff to evaluate and approve certain new building materials administratively. This process would involve coordination with the building official and would apply to materials similar to architectural metal panels that are increasingly common in modern construction. The intent of this approach is to streamline the approval process and reduce the need for Board-level review of routinely accepted material requests.

Regarding landscaping requirements within the *QDCD*, Mr. Sewell explained that staff believes the current requirements are overly prescriptive. While the overall amount of required landscaping was not viewed as excessive, staff believes that the regulations limit flexibility for developers and landscape architects to design and utilize plant materials in more creative and effective ways.

Mr. Sewell noted that should the Board choose to pursue amendments to the *QDCD* ordinance, consideration could also be given to modifying the boundaries of the existing corridors. This could include adding new *QDCD* areas where future development is anticipated, as well as removing areas where development activity is unlikely. In addition, staff has identified some housekeeping items, such as clarifying vehicle storage at auto dealerships, inconsistencies in fence height standards, updating rights-of-way language to reflect Public Works approval instead of GDOT for County roads, and removing the outdated requirement for a traffic management plan because it has been replaced by a newer traffic study requirement adopted by the Board (see May 3, 2022 minutes).

In closing, Mr. Sewell fielded questions from Commissioner Reidelbach and Commissioner Fisher regarding the boundaries/locations of the current *QDCDs* and the flexibility for staff to approve some variations administratively.

3. **Discussion Regarding the Bicentennial Concert**

Administrator Fouts explained that the County is celebrating its bicentennial this year. Community and Human Resources Director Patricia Palmer and Parks and Recreation Director Jim Gay, along with other members, have played key roles on the Bicentennial Committee. Ms. Palmer and Mr. Gay are present to share more about the committee's work, including plans for a proposed concert. Staff has conducted individual conversations with Commissioners, and there appears to be general support for hosting a concert at the Fairgrounds. As preparations to celebrate the bicentennial proceed, staff wishes to ensure that the Board remains informed.

Community and Human Resources Director Palmer provided a brief history regarding plans for the County's bicentennial celebration. She noted that planning began in mid-2025, with the formation of a County-based committee consisting of staff, the Historical Society, the Genealogical Society, the local newspaper, and other community members with a strong interest in Coweta's history. The committee has focused on identifying appropriate and budget-conscious initiatives, including a concert. One of the first initiatives was developing a logo. A community contest was held, and a final design was presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval, and the logo is now in use. Staff also began recording podcasts featuring community members sharing their family histories and personal memories of Coweta County. These are currently being finalized and should be released in the coming months. This initiative is still open to additional participants, and will be made available on the County's website and social media platforms. Staff is also working with the Central Education Center (CEC) to expand the outreach to as broad an audience as possible.

Communications Coordinator Briana Gregory shared that the library system is setting up a small recording station, similar to a story booth, at its locations for public use. Community members will be able to schedule a time to come in and record their personal stories, histories, and experiences. These recordings can then be featured on the Coweta 441 podcast, as well as shared across the County's social media platforms.

Ms. Palmer noted that Communications Coordinator Briana Gregory and Communications Manager Cathy Wickey have led the recording project, with support from the Library System, Parks and Recreation, and Central Education Center (CEC) students, who also assist with the County’s regular podcast and Board meetings. She also highlighted the “200 Acts of Kindness Challenge,” coordinated through the Library, as another bicentennial initiative aimed at encouraging community participation and promoting positive contributions.

Ms. Gregory added that details about additional events are available on the County’s Bicentennial events page (https://www.coweta.ga.us/about-coweta/coweta-county-bicentennial/bidentennial-events). These include the Library’s Bicentennial 200 Book Challenge, ancestry classes, historical talk videos, the Story Booth podcast, the Bicentennial Writing Contest, and the Big Bicentennial Event, with updates posted as information becomes available.

Parks and Recreation Director Gay explained that the recreation programs have been focusing on engaging the County's youth through school involvement, including a writing contest, and by incorporating educational elements into the camp programs. Early on, the committee discussed hosting a birthday-style celebration. Initially, the idea resembled a festival at one of the County's parks, featuring live music, vendors and nonprofits, and a Family Day component. As the committee continued planning and gathering outside feedback, the concept evolved into the possibility of a larger concert.

Ms. Palmer explained that scheduling a concert within the 2026 bicentennial calendar would be difficult. Instead, staff and the committee propose hosting a concert in spring or summer 2027 as a kickoff to the county's next 200 years. She noted that, unlike the Alan Jackson benefit concert following the tornado, this event will not have the same level of gratis assistance, particularly from Alan Jackson, his team, and others who donated their time and expertise. This endeavor will require professional coordination, and staff is requesting consideration to engage an experienced concert and festival producer. The proposed producer specializes in organizing single-day festivals, often in open-field settings, and has managed numerous similar events. Should the Board wish to review his background and past projects, staff can provide additional information. Staff is proposing a two-phased approach. In the first phase, the producer would develop a detailed site plan along with a comprehensive budget outlining the total cost of the event. While the intent is for the concert to be self-sustaining through ticket sales, concessions, and other revenue streams, their upfront cost to initiate planning is $5,600. Should the Board choose to proceed after reviewing the deliverables of phase one, phase two would include specific services to plan and host the concert/festival. Overall, this approach provides a professionally developed concept and operational plan addressing all aspects involved with hosting the concert/festival, including maximizing the use of internal resources such as Facilities, Public Works, Law Enforcement, Fire Rescue, EMA, and other relevant departments.

In response to questions from Chairman McKenzie, Ms. Palmer and Administrator Fouts explained that the second phase would cost an additional $49,000 for the producer to plan and manage the entire event.

Mr. Fouts further explained that the proposal as offered provides some flexibility, allowing the Board to select only the services needed. For example, if EMA or Public Works staff can cover certain responsibilities, those services can be deducted from the cost.

In response to a question from Chairman McKenzie, Ms. Palmer explained that staff has reserved the Fairgrounds for potential dates in April and July 2027.

In response to a question from Commissioner Smith about the possibility of hosting the concert/festival on July 4th, Mr. Gay noted that this might be possible.

In response to a question from Chairman McKenzie, Mr. Fouts noted that staff has been evaluating expansion of the Fairgrounds for additional uses. Public Works Director Handley has been working with an engineer to assess future parking needs to support future events at the site. Additionally, the new road is nearing completion, and staff is waiting for the completion of the roundabout. Timing remains an important factor to ensure these improvements are coordinated in order to make the concert/festival a success.

In response to comments from Chairman McKenzie, Ms. Palmer noted that she neglected to mention that staff intends to utilize coordinated messaging that highlights both the 250th anniversary of the United States and the County’s 200th anniversary through banners and other promotional materials.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that the producer will help identify how the County can recoup its costs associated with hosting the concert/festival.

Mr. Fouts and Ms. Palmer briefly discussed alcoholic beverages, artists, one-day versus two-day events, sponsorships, and the potential for a weather-related cancellation.

In response to a question from Commissioner Reidelbach, Mr. Fouts explained that phase one would need to be completed in order to garner enough information for the Board to decide whether they would like to proceed with phase two.

Mr. Fouts explained that should the Board wish to proceed with phase one, staff will place this issue on the Board's next Regular Meeting agenda for consideration.

Ms. Palmer further explained that staff cannot provide specific details without the full analysis that phase one will provide.

Executive Session - In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 50-14-2

There were no issues to be discussed in Executive Session.

Adjournment

Motion to: Adjourn

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting.

RESULT: Passed (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER: Bob Blackburn
SECONDER: Jeff Fisher
AYES: Bill McKenzie, John Reidelbach, Jeff Fisher, Bob Blackburn, Alphonso Smith